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Ministry of Advanced Education

NURSING SPACES NEARLY DOUBLE, GRAD NUMBERS HIT RECORD

VICTORIA – Government has nearly doubled the number of nurse education spaces, producing a record number of graduates who have received close to 13,000 nursing degrees, diplomas and certificates since 2001, Advanced Education Minister Murray Coell said today.

"We've added hundreds of post-secondary spaces for nurses every single year, and as a result, opportunities for students to follow their dreams of a career in nursing have increased tremendously at public institutions across the province," Coell said. "Because of this unprecedented expansion, we are graduating more nurses than ever before in the history of B.C."

The Province has funded 3,786 new spaces since 2001, an increase of 93 per cent, including another 439 spaces under Budget 2008. As well, 23 nursing programs have been created since 2001. Government is now funding 56 nursing programs in B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions, including 16 four-year bachelor of science in nursing degree programs, and one accelerated BSN that can be completed in three years.

"A wide range of programs is vital in meeting the needs of the variety of students who have their hearts and minds set on a career in nursing," said Susan Duncan, chair of the Nursing Education Council of B.C. and dean of Thompson Rivers University's School of Nursing. "We look forward to the continued development of new and innovative options for students in the nursing profession."

Since government began expanding nursing education, B.C.'s public post-secondary institutions have awarded 12,862 degrees, diplomas and certificates to nursing graduates who have either entered the profession for the first time or have upgraded their skills to work in high-demand areas.

"In the Conversation on Health, British Columbians told us that continued investment in educating new nurses was critical to the future sustainability of our world-class health-care system," Health Minister George Abbott said. "Between the ministries of Advanced Education and Health, our government has committed literally hundreds of millions of dollars in new investments to educate, attract and retain nurses to serve patients across British Columbia."

Last year alone, 2,361 nurses graduated in B.C., up from 1,343 in 2000-01. More than half received their bachelor of science in nursing, most of whom will go on to become registered nurses in B.C., or are already RNs and are completing their degree. The rest earned qualifications as practical nurses, psychiatric nurses, nurse practitioners and specialty nurses in areas like emergency room and intensive care. Some nurses also earned master's and PhDs, which prepare them to teach nursing, or to take on more responsibility in clinical settings.

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"Good programs and good educators are the key to continuing to expand nursing education in this province to prepare for the needs of our aging population," Coell said. "We've created new master's and PhD programs to increase the number of nurses with advanced qualifications who will be able to replace the large number of faculty members retiring each year."

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1 backgrounder(s) attached.

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BACKGROUNDER

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ANNUAL INCREASE IN STUDENT NURSING SPACES

Between 1991 and 2001, only 85 new nursing spaces were added at public post-secondary institutions around B.C. This was an increase of two per cent over a period when the population of B.C. grew by 21 per cent.

Since then, government has funded the equivalent of 3,786 new full-time student spaces for nurses, an increase of 93 per cent. Here are the new spaces that have been added each academic year:

- 2001-02 – 615 seats
- 2002-03 – 651 seats
- 2003-04 – 547 seats
- 2004-05 – 321 seats
- 2005-06 – 377 seats
- 2006-07 – 510 seats
- 2007-08 – 326 seats
- 2008-09 – 439 seats

NURSING PROGRAM EXPANSION IN B.C.

Twenty-three new nursing programs have been created at public post-secondary institutions in B.C. since 2001:

Degree programs:

- Bachelor of science in nursing – four programs
- Bachelor of science in psychiatric nursing – two programs
- Master's – two programs
- Nurse practitioner (master's level, independent practitioners who work with doctors as part of the primary health-care team, providing comprehensive and continuous care for patients) – three programs
- PhD – one program

Certificate programs:

- Practical nurse – 11 programs

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE IN NURSING OPTIONS

More than half the nursing credentials awarded since 2001 have been bachelor of science in nursing degrees, which are required in Canada for anyone who wants to become a registered nurse. In the past seven years, options for earning a BSN have been expanded. Today they include:

- 16 four-year degree programs at public post-secondary institutions around B.C.
- One three-year accelerated degree program, starting this fall at BCIT.

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- The University of B.C.'s accelerated BSN program, which supports students with advanced standing or a bachelor's degree and the prerequisites required to enter directly into third-year courses and complete their degree in two years.
- Advanced placement in degree programs for licensed practical nurses, based on their education and work experience.
- Programs for registered nurses with diplomas, or registered psychiatric nurses, to complete their degrees.
- Refresher programs for Canadian-educated RNs who have been out of the workforce, or for nurses educated outside the country.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR NURSING STUDENTS

- Through the loan forgiveness program, nursing graduates who agree to work in underserved communities in British Columbia for three years will have all of their B.C. student loans forgiven.
- Bursaries are also available for those nursing students who need financial assistance the most. Since 2001, more than 4,300 students have benefited from this program, receiving $15 million in grants.

NURSING CREDENTIALS – PUBLIC POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS

Nursing programs	Academic year 2000-01	Academic year 2006-07	Total graduates since 2001
Bachelor of science in nursing	717	1,228	6,647
Certificate in practical nursing	184	650	3,033
Diploma/degree in psychiatric nursing	51	89	470
Registered nurse refresher (certificate/citation)	182	89	1,038
Sub-total	**1,134**	**2,056**	**11,188**
Graduate nursing	39	80	347
Specialty nursing	170	225	1,327
Sub-total	**209**	**305**	**1,674**
Total	**1,343**	**2,361**	**12,862**

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